

National Reform Success Means
Religious Persecution

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This is most strenuously denied by all National Reformers, just as we should naturally expect; because if they should claim, or even admit, that the success of their movement would involve persecution, they could not proceed a step farther. As a matter of course, we expect that they will deny that persecution will follow the success of their movement. Doubtless a great majority of them are sincere in this denial, because they have never taken the trouble to look to the end of their work; and of all people in the world National Reformers seem to be most oblivious to the teachings of history; but their denials amount to nothing in the face of the declarations that they have made from the beginning, and are still making. We will quote a few statements.*NRSRP 2.1*

Before the first annual meeting of the association an address to the public in behalf of the cause was prepared by the Rev. T. P. Stevenson, W. W. Spear, D.D., and Wm. Getty, Esq., in which the following statement was made:—*NRSRP 2.2*

“It must be deplored that in a Constitution so universally and so justly admired and loved and studied by the American people, there is nothing to turn the mind of the nation to God, to inculcate reverence for the authority of his Sons, or respect for his word.”*NRSRP 2.3*

This shows plainly that the design of the National Reformers is to so modify the Constitution that the government will act as a teacher of religion. In the address of Dr. Johnathan Edwards, at the New York convention, in 1873, it was said of the Constitution:—*NRSRP 2.4*

“We want to put the people into it; the people in full, with their deep and noble reverence for God, the greatest and best, and for his-word as the underlying and paramount law.”*NRSRP 3.1*

Again: In the Cincinnati convention, in 1872, Rev. A. D. Mayo, D.D., in an address on religion in public schools, said that “the State should teach the existence, sovereignty, and providence of God, and the duty of all men and nations to obey his laws; the spiritual nature, moral obligation, natural rights, and immortal life of man; the binding obligation of the morality of Jesus Christ as the only universal moral law; the acceptance of the New Testament morality as the moral constitution of every civilized State.” He further said

that the State is bound to see that the religious morality essential to good citizen-ship is taught.*NRSRP 3.2*

At a convention hold in Monmouth, Ill., September 29, 1884, Rev. M. A. Gault said:—*NRSRP 3.3*

“This movement includes the triumph of every moral reform. Every true reform is simply an effort to get back to some one of the ten commandments. If that law was recognized as the standard of legislation, and if public sentiment was educated up to that standard, it would do away with lying, stealing, intemperance, profanity, Sabbath, desecration, licentiousness, murder, and every evil that now vexes society.”*NRSRP 3.4*

These statements show that the reform contemplates simply the adoption of the Bible as the law of the land. This was plainly declared by Dr. Edwards in the New York Convention. He said:—*NRSRP 3.5*

“If there be anything in the law of Moses the coming of Christ and the subsequent of Judaism did not abrogate, let them be (and there cannot be many of them), and we are prepared to accept them, and have them re-enacted.”*NRSRP 3.6*

We say that with such a Constitution as this, persecution would be inevitable; but as facts are better than arguments, we will give an instance illustrative of the working of such a Constitution in the past.*NRSRP 3.7*

The New York *Observer* of March 22, 1888, contained the fifth of a series of articles on John Calvin, written by the Rev. James M. Lucile D.D. The articles were, as a matter of course eulogistic of Calvin. The article in the issue referred to was upon the trial of Servetus, and the last days of Calvin. Having mentioned the visit of Servetus to Geneva, and his arrest mid trial, the Doctor says:—*NRSRP 4.1*

“The specific charge against Servetus was that of teaching contrary to the Bible doctrines; but this was only a specification under the more general charge of attempting to destroy the peace, and, indeed, the existence, of the Genevan State. The Genevans had

adopted the Bible as a part of their constitution, and every citizen had sworn to defend it; Servetus was thus the foe to the civil order. It was in no sense an ecclesiastical trial, but one which belonged to the civil court, by which it was conducted. Calvin was an expert witness on the points raised, not a judge. That the animus was not that of religious rancor is evident from the fact that Calvin himself was at the same time in fraternal correspondence with acknowledged heretics, like Socinus. But when the heresy was made a lever for the overthrow of the republic, it became a different matter, and the Genevans would have been unworthy of their political existence if they had not been willing to defend it.”*NRSRP* 4.2

The Genevans had a model National Reform government; and the burning of Servetus was a natural result, just as Dr. Ludlow says. And the fact that a man can be found who will apologize for the burning of Servetus, and who will say that it was not an ecclesiastical trial, still at the same time admitting that it was the result of the Bible being adopted as a part of the constitution, is sufficient evidence that if the National Reformers should succeed in having the Bible adopted as part of the Constitution, doctors of divinity and influential teachers would not be lacking who would defend persecution under it.”*NRSRP* 4.3

But note that it is denied that the burning of Servetus was persecution, or that his trial was an ecclesiastical trial. It is stated that his heresy was made a lever for the overthrow of the government. But how could a heresy affect the government?—Simply because the Bible had been adopted as a part of the constitution—not necessarily the Bible as it reads, but the Bible as interpreted by those in authority; and, therefore, whoever differed in opinion from the established belief concerning the Bible, was talking treason and violating the civil law. If it be denied that the execution of the law in such cases is persecution, then there never was persecution; for when the early martyrs were put to death it was only because they were violating the laws of Rome. James and Paul were beheaded simply because their conscientious convictions in regard to the Bible compelled them to violate the civil law of Rome. And so with what we have been accustomed to call the Roman Catholic persecution in the Dark Ages. If the trial of

Servetus was not an ecclesiastical trial, and his execution was not religious persecution, simply because in differing with Calvin concerning the Scriptures he was going contrary to the law of the State, then the Catholics never persecuted anybody; for Cranmer, and Ridley, and Huss, and Jerome of Prague, and thousands of others who were burned at the stake, were tried and put to death for disobeying civil laws. The laws of the church were the laws of the State. The one who defends the burning of Servetus must likewise defend the massacre of St. Bartholomew's day, and the destruction of the Huguenots and Albigenses. All these people were put to death simply because the Bible, as interpreted by the priests, was a part of the civil law of those countries. The Catholic Church says that all these persons were punished by the State as law breakers. This is in one sense true; but they neglect to state that the church apprehended them, and priests tried them. The Inquisition found them guilty of violating the ecclesiastico-civil law, and they handed them over to the State for punishment, recommending them always to mercy, but expressly stipulating that they should be burned at the stake; and the civil power, as the servant of the church, was bound to obey.*NRSRP 4.4*

Let the State become the servant of the church again, according to National Reform ideas, and let anybody's interpretation of the Bible, we care not whose, become a part of the civil law, and the same thing will take place again. It cannot be otherwise, for the State is bound to enforce whatever laws it enacts. If it enacts laws concerning matters of faith and doctrine, then it is bound to punish the man who differs from the established faith. But such punishment is simply religious persecution.*NRSRP 5.1*

The cool way in which Dr: Ludlow disposes of Servetus, finds a parallel in the way that men defend the enforcement of Sunday as at the present time. Says he:—*NRSRP 6.1*

"If there was one place in the world the fugitive should have avoided, it was Geneva. The laws of that place he knew were very strict. Calvin had long before warned him not to come there to disturb the peace. The people of that commonwealth had the right to protect their political existence. They had fought for twenty years to get rid of Catholic tyranny, and were now in a life-and-death

struggle with the Libertine element. Yet Servetus turned up in Geneva. His purpose was clear. Here the Romish Inquisition could not follow him, for the Calvinists would defend him against that. But while thus receiving their hospitality, he could get a dagger under the fifth rib of Calvinism by siding with the Libertines.”*NRSRP 6.2*

We say this is simply abominable. The man that could coolly write such a paragraph as that would be a worthy companion of Loyola, and a ready tool of the Inquisition. He says that Calvin had warned Servetus and to come to Geneva to disturb the peace, and that the people had a right to protect their political existence. But what was their politics?—It was Calvinism. Servetus disturbing the peace did not consist in beating drums, or doing noisy work during public service, or in making any demonstrations whatever, but in writing and talking against Calvinism, as Dr. Ludlow himself says. The sum of his offense was opposition to Calvinism. For this and this alone he was burned. And a professed Protestant in this century and in this decade, upholds the cowardly and blood-thirsty deed! Yet there are men found who say that this is too enlightened an age to allow such a thing as persecution for religious opinion.*NRSRP 6.3*

Such talk is very similar to that indulged in by the advocates of National Reform Sunday laws. They want to protect the peace of society, they say. One of their adherents, when spoken to in regard to the conviction of Mr. Conklin, a Georgia farmer, for cutting wood on Sunday, coolly replied that if Conklin had not known the law, there might be some ground of pity; but when he knew the law and deliberately violated it, nobody but himself is to blame for the result.*NRSRP 6.4*

But when the National Reform American Sabbath Union movement succeeds, it will not be necessary for the person to work in order to disturb the peace. Servetus disturbed the peace of Geneva by writing and talking against Calvinism, because Calvinism was the politics of Geneva. And so when the State “re-enacts the fourth commandment,” as Mr. Shepard and Mr. Crafts say, Sunday will be a State institution, and the individual who talks against that institution by declaring that the fourth commandment requires the observance of the seventh and not the first day, will be a disturber of the public peace. As much as this is contemplated in the

statement which we have before quoted from the *Western Christian Advocate*, edited by Rev. G. W. Bothwell, D.D., of Oakland, Cal. Speaking of the petition against a Sunday law and the union of Church and State, in his issue of March 22, Mr. Bothwell said:
—*NRSRP 7.1*

“Most of the States make provision for the exercise of the peculiar tenets of belief which are entertained by the Adventists. They can worship on Saturday, and call it the Sabbath if they choose; but there let their privileges end. Instead of thankfully making use of concessions granted them, and then going off quietly and attending to their own business as they ought, they start out making unholy alliances that they may defeat the purposes of their benefactors. None of these bills are aimed at them; but if they fail to appreciate the fact, they may yet call down upon themselves such a measure of public disfavor as that legislation embarrassing to them will result.”*NRSRP 7.2*

This is simply a threat of punishment that will be meted out to those who shall dare to protest against national religious legislation, and shall dare to teach that Sunday is not the Sabbath. It will not be necessary for them to work on Sunday; if by their preaching according to their conscientious convictions concerning the word, they strike against the established religion, they will be considered as violators of the public peace, and will meet with punishment.*NRSRP 7.3*

Finally, as demonstrating conclusively, even to those who cannot draw conclusions, we quote the following bold declaration from a speech by Dr. Mayo in the Cincinnati National Reform Convention. Speaking of the people of the United States, he said:—*NRSRP 8.1*

“They will plant in the great charter of liberties an acknowledgment of the nation’s dependence on Almighty God, and its duty to conform to the laws of religious and Christian morality. They will protect the rights of every citizen, and persecute no man for his religion until that religion drives him to disobey the law which expresses the will of the majority concerning the moral duty of the citizen. And that will is always open to revision by constitutional means.”*NRSRP 8.2*

We do not know how anyone can ask for any stronger proof than this that the National Reform movement contemplates persecution. And note, it is not even claimed that the persecution will be for actual violation of the law of God, but for acting or thinking contrary to the will of the majority concerning moral duties, with the express understanding that that will may change at any time.*NRSRP 8.3*

Any person who can defend so outrageous a scheme has no sense whatever of what constitutes liberty.*NRSRP 8.4*

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